

REMARKS

Claims 18-46 remain pending in the present application. Claims 1-17 have been cancelled. Claims 18-29 have been amended. Claims 30-46 are new. Basis for the amendments and new claims can be found throughout the specification, claims and drawings originally filed.

SPECIFICATION

The title of the invention is not descriptive. Applicants have amended the title so that it is clearly indicative of the invention. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS

Claims 8 and 24 are objected to because of informalities. The claims have been amended to overcome the rejection. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Regarding the sequence of Applicants' claims, Claims 1-17 have been cancelled and Claims 30-46 have been added to correct the sequence. The following is a list of corresponding claims:

<u>Old</u>	<u>New</u>
1	30
2-8	35-41
9-12	43-46
13-14	31-32
15	42
16-17	33-34

Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended the original Claims 18-29 as well as the renumbered Claims 30-46 to overcome the rejections identified by the Examiner as well as other issues identified by the Applicants. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 13 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Applicant's Admitted Prior Art (AAPA). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. As AAPA, the Examiner has cited page 13, line 28 to page 14, line 2. This portion of the specification is a description of Figure 5, not Figure 4 as stated by the Examiner (page 13, line 23). Figure 5 represents a systems related to the present invention and not to the prior art. The specification is giving a comparison between the present invention and AAPA with reference to the illustrations of Figure 4 and 5.

Thus, Applicants believe Claims 1, 13 and 17 (now 30, 31 and 34) patentably distinguish over the art of record. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8, 13 and 18-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Akimoto (U.S. Pat. No. 5,980,591). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Akimoto discloses a system for improving the throughput in transporting wafers in respective lots in an apparatus having the capability of a plurality of processing (e.g. an apparatus capable of processing both "resist application" and "developing process"). Akimoto's teaching is related to an improvement for waiting conditions of wafers, not an improvement how numerous lots are loaded on a carrier.

In this respect, Akimoto does not disclose the present invention which provides a method capable of increasing the in-process efficiency in a manufacturing, processing or machining (or, measuring or inspecting) apparatus.

To this end (i.e. to increase the number of lots simultaneously loadable on a same carrier), the present invention employs a mix-loading method details of which will be apparent from the explanation in the specification with reference to the illustrations in Figs. 5, 7-10 and 12-14.

Furthermore, at an arbitrary state of a manufacturing operation, the present invention unloads some of the lots from the carrier if judged that all of these lots are not processed together, as apparent from the explanation in the specification with reference to the illustrations in Figs. 9, 11, 12 and 14.

Thus, Applicants believe that Claims 1-8, 13 and 18-24 (now 30, 35-41 and 18-24) patentably distinguish over the art of record. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 10-15, 18, 19, 21, 24 and 26-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Conboy (U.S. Pat. No. 6,449,522).

Conboy discloses a cassette managing system for preventing clean cassettes from being contaminated by dirty cassettes, and accordingly does not anticipate the

present invention which provides a method capable of increasing the in-process efficiency.

Thus, Applicants believe that Claims 1-3, 5, 8, 10-15, 18, 19, 21, 24 and 26-29 (now Claims 30, 35, 36, 38, 41, 44-46, 31, 32, 42, 18, 19, 21, 24 and 26-29) are believed to patentably distinguish over the art of record. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 9 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Akimoto (U.S. Pat. No. 5,980,591) or Conboy (U.S. Pat. No. 6,449,522) as applied to claim 2 above, and further in view of Jones (U.S. Pat. No. 5,856,923). Claim 9 depended from Claim 2 (now Claim 43 depending from Claim 35) and Claim 25 depends from Claim 18. As stated above, Claims 9 (now 43) and Claim 18 are believed to patentably distinguish over the art of record. Thus, Claims 9 (now 43) and Claim 25 are also believed to patentably distinguish over the art of record. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt

and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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